THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND) : (a) At present there is no storage reservoir specially meant to feed he Sone Canals, but the Rihand hydel Reservoir in Uttar Pradesh provides some regulated releases. However, some difficulties are still experienced in portions of the Command.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) No such proposal has been received from the Bihar Government.

(d) Does not arise.

Hike in prices of newsprint

1528. SHRI KAILASH PATI MISHRA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) what is the diffusion rate of newspapers in India and how does it compare with that in other countries; and

(b) what is the impact of (i) levy of customs duty on imported newsprint, (ii) non-availability of foreign exchange to import the sanctioned imports and (iii) repeated price-hikes of Indian newsprint, on the diffusion rate of newspapers and also on the growth of print-media?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI V. N. GADGIL): (a) The Second Press Commission has observed that the diffusion rate of newspapers in India is low as compared to certain other countries. The relevant extracts from the report of the Commission are reproduced below:-

Though Indian now has the second largest number of daily newspapers in Asia and the fourth largest in the world (after the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany and China), the circulation of newspapers relative to the population continues to be very low. This is despite the increase in literacy from 15.67 per cent at the 1961 Census to 36.17 per cent at the 1981 Census. The MacBride Commission's Report says that Asia (excluding the Arab countries) had a circulation of 65 copies of dailies per 1,000 inhabitants in 1975. Japan had a circulation of well above 500 copies of dailies per 1,000 people during the same year. In India the diffusion rate of dailies per 1,000 people was only about 15.4 copies in 1975. While it may not be appropriate to compare India with a highly industrialised country like Japan, even a comparision with Malaysia and Sri Lanka is not favourable. Against a diffusion rate of 19.7 copies per 1,000 people in India in 1979, Malaysia had a circulation of 75 copies and Sri Lanka of 49 copies per 1,000 people even in 1970.

(b) According to a study carried out by the Bureau of Industrial costs and Prices, the impact of customs duty at the rate of Rs. 825/ per metric tonne is rather negligible more so when the rate of customs duty has been subsequently reduced to Rs. 550/- per metric tonne.

Notwithstanding the fact that because of the constraints of foreign exchange, the STC was not in a position to import the newsprint in full, as allocated by the Registrar of Newspapers for India, it was ensured that no newspaper had to interrupt its poublication for want of newsprint.

The recent hike in the price of domestic newsprint was effected after detailed study. It was warrented by escalation in the cost of raw materials and other inputs. No study has yet been done about its impact on the newspaper industry.